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ABSTRACT

A combined interview with two educators active in peace education in Ireland, North and South, is presented in this document. Maura Ward and Paul Rogers work within the Joint Peace Education Programme of the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace and the Irish Council of Churches. In the interview, Ward and Rogers each discuss their experiences, both in training sessions for teaching staff on peace education and in the development of teaching materials on peace and justice for use in primary and post-primary schools. (DB)

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PEACE EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING MATERIALS FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE IN IRELAND

Paul Rogers
Maura Ward
and
The Project "Preparedness for Peace"

This miniprint presents a combined interview with Maura Ward and Paul Rogers, carried out at the Budapest International Congress of Teachers for Peace. (Interviewer: Åke Bjerstedt.) Maura Ward and Paul Rogers work together within the Joint Peace Education Programme of the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace and the Irish Council of Churches. They have considerable experience, both of training sessions for teaching staff on peace education and of the development of teaching materials on peace and justice for use in primary and post-primary schools.

The two addresses are: Paul Rogers, Joint Peace Education Programme, Inter-Church Centre, 48 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast BT9 6AZ, N. Ireland; Maura Ward, Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, 169 Booterstown Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Ireland. – The interview is reprinted from "Peace, Environment and Education", 1991, 2(1), 47-55.

PEACE EDUCATION IN SCHOOL: A CONVERSATION WITH MAURA WARD AND PAUL ROGERS, IRELAND

1.

ÅB: As an introduction, could you say a few words about yourself and your interest in the field of "peace education"?

MW: I am a member of the Presentation Congregation which was founded in Ireland, principally for the education of the poor. I have been a teacher for 36 years, 18 years at primary level and 18 at post primary level. I had a great interest in the less-able students and tried to ensure that even the weakest students had a programme of education that suited them. Consequently I got involved in curriculum development in an effort to provide such programmes. I think it was because of this interest I was asked to become a member of the secretariat of the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace. My main work is in peace education.

PR: I first got interested in the world of peace education about 12 years ago when I applied for a teacher fellowship in peace education which was to be based at the University of Ulster, Belfast. I got that fellowship, and during the year I travelled and investigated what was happening in peace education in the British Isles, in Holland and in America. I visited also the United World College of the Atlantic, in Wales, which was at that time the only school, I think, in the British Isles which offered any kind of peace studies course.

At the end of that year I produced a syllabus for secondary schools and a small teaching booklet to back up the first part of that syllabus which was focused on peace and the individual. The syllabus itself was in four parts, working from the individual, community, national and international level, but I only, because of the time scale of the fellowship, was able to produce teaching materials for the first part of it. When I went back to teaching, I used those materials in my own classroom. Teachers from various parts of the world also used them and gave me informal feedback on their use.

Six years ago, I got an opportunity to do the Master's degree in education, and part of that work meant that I was able to formally evaluate the materials I had produced myself. I wrote a dissertation on peace education entitled

"Peace Education - Theory and Practice in the Curriculum". The first half was a theoretical resumé of peace education and what it meant, and the second half reported on the practical evaluation of teaching materials on peace education in the classroom.

Five years ago the Justice and Peace Commission asked me to be part of the Management Committee of the Joint Peace Education Programme for which I am now working, and three years ago I left school and took up a full-time appointment with that programme as a Peace Education Officer based in Belfast, that is The Joint Peace Education Programme of the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace and the Irish Council of Churches.

ÅB: Could you also tell me a little about the character of your present work?

MW: The Irish Commission for Justice and Peace is concerned with policy, research and education in the fields of human rights, development, justice and peace. The Commission became involved in peace education initially out of a deep concern for the Northern Ireland conflict. It worked to build up a long-term, comprehensive ecumenically integrated programme with the Irish Council of Churches - The Joint Peace Education Programme - which is unusual, if not unique, being an integrated project involving all the main churches operating on an all-Ireland basis across two political jurisdictions. The structure of the Joint Peace Programme itself involves an important peace education process. Both Paul and I work on this programme for the Commission. We work with staffs and students in schools. We give one or two day training sessions to teaching staffs on the promotion of peace and justice in schools. Occasionally we give sessions to students on topics requested by teachers. Teachers contact us for materials and other resources that may be of help to them in school. Because so many have asked us for materials for schools we develop materials on peace and justice for use in both primary and post-primary schools.

This is the process we use in the development of the materials. We plan a series of topics to work on. Every summer we have a workshop during which teachers from Ireland, North and South, Catholic and Protestant, come together and brainstorm on the chosen topics. They work with us for a week during which we worked out a framework for a module or two. Then the three peace education officers work on it and get it ready for piloting in schools. The pilot study takes place in about 20-30 schools to make sure that it's suitable to for all types of schools. The materials have to be worked out simultaneously in and for two education systems, one in Northern Ireland and

one in the Republic of Ireland. Then, following the recommendations from the teachers involved in the piloting, we revise the text, sometimes together, sometimes separately, until we bring it to the stage of final publishing.

We have a primary school programme for the 8-12 age group *"Free to Be"*, dealing with the promotion of self-worth and self-awareness and the analysis and understanding of actions and attitudes, awareness of people of other races and faiths, the use of words and symbols, the environment and finally people of peace. It can be used not only in primary schools but also in junior post-primary.

Another programme for upper primary, junior post-primary *"Looking at Churches and Worship in Ireland"* aims more specifically at promoting an awareness and understanding of different Church traditions and breaking down barriers, prejudices and suspicions between students from different religious traditions.

A development education module for 9-13 year olds *"So Everybody Fights"* was published in 1988, on the relationship between world development and world disarmament. It is suitable for upper primary and junior post-primary. This module covers quite a lot besides development. It also helps the students to understand the concepts as they relate to their everyday lives. It is a very popular programme with teachers.

PR: Our most recent work is on a series of materials for postprimary schools (11-16 year old) called "The Sedekah Peace Programme". "Sedekah" is a Hebrew word which is sometimes translated into English as 'justice' or 'righteousness', but it has a more complex meaning in the original Hebrew which could be translated as "God's power to put things right in human community and in nature".

MW: The first module of this series was "Peacemaker". It consists of eight units, and it seeks to develop knowledge and skills which would help students understand and cope with conflicts at different levels - in their own lives and in the wider society: national and global. Its general aim is to help students to be more at peace with themselves and with others whoever and wherever those others are. It doesn't seek to promote any specific religious or political views, but it does encourage the recognition and development of social skills and values and stresses the importance of a positive self-image.

It is an activity-based program involving the students as much as possible through working on projects, taking part in role-play, group discussions, reaching consensus, and brain-storming. It's a teacher's book, with

photocopiable work-sheets for the students. We are not in the money-making business; what we really want to do is to promote peace and justice.

ÅB: What would be the age level that you intend it for?

MW: It is intended for 12-14 year olds, i.e. the first and second years in the post-primary school, but it is quite flexible and can be used at different age levels, we think, using different examples. In the Republic of Ireland we find that it is used very much in the Transition Year with 15-16 year olds (after the students take the first departmental examination, the Intermediate Certificate, students take a year to study topics that help them to broaden their horizons before preparing for the next examination). It is also used in work-experience classes e.g. The Vocational Preparation Training Course with 15-16 year old students.

ÅB: How are the units written originally? Are you dividing the writing between yourself, or do you have teachers from the field involved also?

MW: We do the final writing ourselves.

PR: We have groups of teachers working on the ideas in workshops initially, and then one of us takes the major responsibility for writing. Maura (based in Dublin) and myself (based in Belfast) have worked together on our second module entitled "Power To Hurt - Exploring Violence" which is aimed at 12-15 year olds and will be published soon.

2.

ÅB: What do you think of first when you hear the words "peace education"?

PR: What I would think of first would be my job: Something that's good to be involved in, something that is very valuable, something that isn't just the normal run of the mill, something that could make a difference to people's lives and help make the world a better place. For the past thirteen years I've seen very positive and encouraging developments in Peace Education and this is extremely heartening.

MW: Yes, I think I would feel the same as Paul: Peace education is something worthwhile. It deals not only with disarmament, but with people at peace with themselves and others, peace with justice. In school, it should be part of many subjects, not just standing alone. It should be further promoted through the ethos of the school so that what the students experience in their interaction with others is not at variance with the values taught.

We look on peace education as a permanent response to conflict in general with the corresponding necessity to develop a positive approach both to

peacemaking and to the development of people who internalise a live vision of peace, have a real sense of justice, personal and social, are sensitised to the various social manifestations of violence and conflict in their own lives and in the wider world, have the knowledge, skills and motivation to work effectively, opposing violence, dealing constructively with conflict and actively building peace in the different situations in which they find themselves, have a personal commitment to non-violence, both as a way of life and as a means of changing society with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitude.

PR: It aims at improved relations at all levels (personal, national and international), as well as at improved self-awareness or self-image, involving a feeling of empowerment.

3.

ÅB: If you think back on your own school days, were there some aspects in your schooling that might be considered an attempt at "peace education"?

PR: My own schooling did involve much attention to values, such as being responsible, having a "second chance", patience and caring for others. There was no explicit peace education, but a very definite implicit recognition of many of the values related to peace.

MW: In general, there was not much in my old school that was known as peace education. However, just as Paul indicated, much took place in religion classes and in the school in general promoting corresponding values.

4.

ÅB: Do you believe that schools in your country, as you know them today, contribute to a "peace education"?

MW: Some schools are involved in peace education, some are not directly involved. Any true education is peace education as it develops all aspects of the students, helping them to become good citizens. Because of the troubles in our country I would think that all schools are aware of the need to promote peace. We are developing our modules at the request of teachers who were looking for suitable materials, so that would indicate their anxiety to promote peace in their classrooms. Are you asking if the structure of the schools or their ethos promotes peace? Yes, I think that, in general, this happens, but the competitive element and the striving for results in schools may not always be conducive to it.

PR: Aspects of peace education are often dealt with under other headings, such as Careers Education, Life Skills, Religious Education, Counselling, History, Geography, English etc.
MW: Boys' schools have been more "academic" than others, but I notice new developments in them. Many of these schools have approached us for help and guidance in the promotion of peace and justice in their schools.

5.
ÅB: Do you think it is at all possible for schools to contribute to a "peace education"? If so, what are some of the steps and measures to be taken that you think of first?
MW: Yes, there is much that can be done. Openness is important. School staffs can be helped to be more conscious of the need to promote peace in their schools. Experts should be invited to the schools to speak to the teachers and students about peace and justice issues in order to raise awareness. The young people in schools should be encouraged to research these issues and, if possible, to become involved in the alleviation of some of the problems. This could be done through an annual peace project inviting young people to investigate various issues, follow them through during the year and present their findings in their class, school or locality.
PR: I agree. Materials are also important. Well planned, well presented teaching materials, appropriate to the age and ability of the students, are vital prerequisites to good peace education. It is now widely accepted that there cannot be good curriculum development without good teacher development and, therefore, teachers are central to developing peace education curriculum.

6.
ÅB: What would be some of the possible differences in peace education approaches among younger and older students in schools?
MW: That is difficult to answer, since it depends much on the total context. We aim at an education where students learn from experience and this experience can be adapted to various ages and interests.
PR: The only difference I would think of would be related to what the students would be able to cope with as determined by their developmental stage. Activity and experiential learning are most important for all age groups.

7.
ÅB: If you were an upper-secondary school teacher in a subject with which you are particularly familiar, how would you like to make the students more conscious of and more prepared for problems of peace, within that subject?
MW: If I were a teacher of civics, I would have many opportunities to deal with explicit peace education. If I were teaching English, I would use texts to analyze conflicts, violence and injustice, and I would try to make the students aware of alternatives.
PR: Most subjects could be dealt with from the point of view of peace education very easily. For example, I would like to deal with third world development issues in Geography and History. The New York Intercommunity Centre for Justice and Peace have developed an excellent workshop for teachers on the process of "infusing" justice and peace topics into mainstream curriculum subjects. The process and results are very impressive and we are about to begin some teacher workshops on this process for teachers in Ireland.

8.
ÅB: In international debates, the terms "disarmament education" and "peace education" have been used, in addition to some other related terms ("global education", "education for international understanding" etc.). Do you have any comments and preferences as to this terminology?
MW: "Disarmament education" is very narrow. This deals only with one very small aspect of "peace education".
PR: I like the term "peace education". It is a more allembracing term than some of the others and suggests a more positive approach. It is also now a fairly well established term internationally and is gaining ground in our country. "Education for international understanding" and some of the other terms you mention are more restrictive than "peace education".

9.
ÅB: In many countries, questions related to disarmament and peace are highly controversial. Would you anticipate any difficulties, for example with parents or other members of the community, when introducing peace education in schools? If so, what kind of difficulties? Do you see any way out of such problems?
MW: There are some difficulties, but less so than in other countries due to the fact that we are a neutral country. Violence and negative intergroup attitudes

have played such an big role in our society, it should be easy for people to see the need for some kind of peace education.

PR: Our schools in Northern Ireland exist in a very divided and often violent society. Our own community violence has resulted in a number of teachers searching for a role in helping to solve our political, social and economic problems. A lot of goodwill exists at all levels in this search, but there are those (parents included) who would vigorously object to schools being involved in this kind of work. Parents and pupils in such instances, should have the right to withdraw from these activities but those who wish to carry on with curriculum experimentation in this area should also have the right to work at building a more just and peaceful society here.

10.

ÅB: What needs to be done in teacher training in order to prepare future teachers more adequately for the area of "peace education"?

PR: There is a need to raise awareness in teacher education regarding the possibilities of peace education. We also need to bring schools together across the political and religious domains. There is something being done in teacher training related to peace education, but not to the degree that we would like. The same is true for in-service training. There have been some courses, but there is a great need for more. In Northern Ireland we have introduced the term "Education For Mutual Understanding" to a new common curriculum. Peace Education has a lot to offer this new area.

MW: It is very important that teacher training colleges introduce "Peace Education" into their courses. Young teachers need to be comfortable with their subject and if they learn to promote peace through their teaching while in school and are made aware of the need to do so they will more readily do this when they are appointed to a school. Groups of teachers who have had the experience of working in the Third World have been active in this area, helping to promote peace and justice education in our schools.

11.

ÅB: In many schools, the students represent a variety of nationalities and cultural backgrounds. To what extent would it be possible to use this fact as an aid in education for peace? Would you expect some difficulties in doing so?

MW: I think having a variety of backgrounds can be a marvellous aid. It depends, however, on the ethos of the school and the use made of this aid. To

get it to work well, teachers, students, parents and the local community should work together.

PR: Most of our schools do not have big cultural or national differences because most tend to have only pupils from one cultural tradition, i.e. Catholic/Nationalist, Protestant/Unionist, but where they do exist, I think it is very appropriate to utilize this as an aid to peace education. One of our main tasks in peace education in Northern Ireland is to encourage a coming together of teachers and pupils from the two separated school systems. A lot of new work and experience is emerging in this field and this is encouraging.

12.

ÅB: Sometimes the term "global survival" is used to refer to an area dealing both with the risks of nuclear war and with the risks of far-reaching environmental damage through pollution and overuse of resources. How do you look upon dealing with these two categories of risks together in school? Do you have any suggestions as to how the teacher could approach the problem area of environmental damage?

MW: I find it very natural to include the problems of environmental damage in projects relating to peace education, and we did so in our very first material. In the module that will soon be printed, "Power to Hurt", there is reference to the environment right through the module as we consider any abuse of the environment to be an act of violence.

PR: I agree. The theme "Justice, Peace and the Environment" has also been a central focus in recent discussions between the Christian churches as in the Basel Assembly of Churches in May 1989. I suppose, as peace educators, we should also be extremely concerned not to present students with too negative a picture. We have to be realistic, but we should always be on guard against students feeling too depressed and powerless.

13.

ÅB: Is there anything else that you would like to add about the school and peace education?

MW: I think that greater efforts should be made through organisations such as IPRA to have Peace Education included in the national curricula for schools in every country. We know from experience that only teachers dedicated to peace education will work at its promotion unless it is a subject or part of a subject for public examination.

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